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**The Pew Charitable Trusts’  
Statement to the Permanent Working Group of the 26 Regular Meeting of ICCAT  
18 November 2019**

Pew urges the Permanent Working Group (PWG) to take action at this year’s Commission meeting to increase observer coverage, strengthen transshipment oversight, and implement strong vessel identification rules.

Despite repeated recommendations from the SCRS to increase observer coverage, ICCAT still only requires five percent observer coverage for longline vessels, meaning that few catch reports are corroborated by an independent observer on board. Citing the need to improve scientific information from longline fisheries on target species as well as comprehensive data on interactions with non-target species and recognizing that Paragraph 18 of ICCAT Rec. 16-14 requires it to be reviewed by the Commission this year, Pew urges PWG to direct the SCRS to develop an Electronic Monitoring standards workplan by 2020, which sets a timeline for developing and adopting standards. Noting that many purse seiners already implement 100 percent observer coverage, ICCAT should increase observer coverage gradually to 100 percent for all longline operations, through a mix of human observers and electronic systems.

This year Pew submitted two papers on transshipment to the Compliance Committee (COC-312 Annex 1 & 2). The first paper is a brief analysis of CPC and Secretariat reports on transshipment, and it highlights that the number of reported high seas transshipment events continue to increase, with bigeye tuna, a species currently overfished and experiencing overfishing, accounting for more than 67 percent (19,544.83t) of the fish transshipped in 2017. The second report is based on Automated Identification System (AIS) data analyzed in consultation with Global Fishing Watch. That paper highlights the possibility that unreported transshipments may have occurred within the Convention area in 2017. Both papers illustrate the need for better regulation and reporting of ICCAT transshipment activities to ensure full and effective monitoring and reduce opportunities for illegal fishing and introduction of illegally caught fish into the seafood supply chain. The USA’s proposal to amend Rec. 16-15 (PWG-420) addresses several of the concerns that Pew highlighted in our submissions to the Compliance Committee, and we urge PWG to adopt this proposal with broad support.

Pew acknowledges the discussion on VMS at the IMM intersessional meeting, and we again urge PWG to continue to strengthen VMS by requiring inclusion of the ICCAT Secretariat as a recipient of VMS data, either through direct reporting by fishing vessels or by near real time reporting of VMS data from the Fishery Monitoring Centers of ICCAT flag State authorities. We also encourage Parties to allocate IMO numbers to all eligible vessels. These include those that at least 12 m long and operating outside of the waters of their flag State and all vessels 100 GT and above.

Whilst commending ICCAT’s decision to align its port State measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing with the FAO’s Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) last year, Pew

strongly supports Norway's proposal on providing information on the implementation of that Agreement (PWG-414). RFMOs, including ICCAT, play a key role in ensuring consistency among global port controls and are well placed to provide information on implementation that will help strengthen the effectiveness of the PSMA.

We would also like to stress the importance of fisher and fisheries observer safety and urge CPCs to support proposal PWG-409 as forwarded from IMM. Additionally, by implementing two tools designed to address these issues, the Cape Town Agreement and the Work in Fishing Convention, Parties have an opportunity to improve safety standards and ensure decent working and living conditions on board thousands of flagged vessels operating within the Convention Area. Perpetrators of IUU fishing tend not to worry about vessel certification or the safety and wellbeing of those onboard. Implementing these tools and, critically, capitalizing on the potential for harmonizing inspections between them and PSMA, could have a big impact in the fight against IUU fishing by increasing the likelihood of detecting anomalies. The Pew delegation is available to share a white paper with more information on these tools to any interested Parties.

Finally, in our capacity as the Chair of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative's Working Group to Define Best Practice and Inform Policy, Pew acknowledges and supports Norway's proposal PWG-417 to address lost, abandoned, or otherwise discarded fishing gear in the ICCAT Convention Area. Many of the points included in the proposal align with the best practices identified by our working group and adopted by the Global Ghost Gear Initiative, after extensive stakeholder consultation, and its more than 100-member organizations.